EUCHARISTIC STATIONS OF THE CROSS

St. Peter Julian Eymard

FIRST STATION

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

JESUS is condemned by His own people, by is the very ones He showered with His favors. He is condemned as a fomenter of rebellion, He Who is goodness itself; as a blasphemer, He Who is holiness itself; as one seeking power, He Who made Himself the least of all. He is condemned to die on the Cross like the lowest of slaves. Jesus lovingly accepts this sentence of death: He came down to this earth in order to suffer and die and to teach us to do the same.

In His Holy Eucharist Jesus is again condemned to death: primarily in His graces, which are rejected; in His love, which is slighted; in His sacramental state, by the unbeliever who denies Him, by horrible sacrilege. By unworthy Communions, the bad Christian sells Jesus Christ to the devil, delivers Him up to his own passions, casting Him at the feet of Satan, king of his heart, and crucifies Him in his sinful body. Jesus is more cruelly treated by bad Christians than by the Jews. In Jerusalem He was condemned only once, but in the Blessed Sacrament, He is condemned every day and in thousands of places, and by an appalling number of unjust judges. And yet Jesus allows Himself to be insulted, despised, condemned: He still continues His sacramental life in order to show us that His love for us is without condition or reserve, that it is greater than our ingratitude.

O Jesus, forgive, I beseech Thee, all sacrileges! Should I ever have committed any, I want to pass my life making reparation for them and loving and honoring Thee for them that despise Thee. Grant me the grace to die with Thee!

SECOND STATION

JESUS IS MADE TO BEAR HIS CROSS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

IN Jerusalem the Jews lay a shameful and heavy Cross upon Jesus. It was the instrument used at that time for the punishment of the basest of men. Jesus joyfully takes upon Himself this overburdening Cross; He receives it eagerly, kisses it lovingly, and bears it with meekness. In that way He wishes to make it sweet to us, lighten it for us, make it pleasant and attractive to us, and consecrate it in His Blood.

In the divine Sacrament of the altar, bad Christians lay a much heavier Cross upon Jesus, one much more shameful for His Heart. This Cross is their acts of irreverence in the holy place, their distracted thoughts, their coldness of heart m His presence, their lukewarm devotion. What a humiliating Cross it is for Jesus, to have children so lacking in respect, disciples so worthless!

Jesus also bears my crosses in His Sacrament. He places them on his Heart to sanctify them; He covers them with His love, with His kisses, in order to make them attractive to me, but He wants me to carry them for Him, to offer them to Him; He is even willing to listen to the outpourings of my grief, to let me weep over my crosses and ask help and consolation of Him. Oh, how light is the cross that comes by way of the Holy Eucharist! How beautiful and radiant it comes forth from the Heart of Jesus! How good it is to receive it from His hands and to kiss it after Him! To the Eucharist then I will run for refuge in my troubles; thither will I go for comfort and strength; thither will I go to learn to suffer and to love!

Forgive, O Lord, all who treat Thee irreverently in Thy Sacrament of love! Forgive my moments of indifference, of forgetfulness in thy presence! I wish to love Thee, I do love Thee with all my heart!

THIRD STATION

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

JESUS has lost so much blood during the three hours of His agony and beneath the blows of the scourge, He is so weakened by the cruel night passed under the guard of His enemies, that after walking a short distance He falls beneath the weight of His Cross.

How many times Jesus Eucharistic falls in particles of the Sacred Species without anyone being aware of it! But what makes Him fall from grief is the sight of a soul sullied by mortal sin! Ah, how much more painfully Jesus falls in a young heart that receives Him unworthily on the day of its First Holy Communion! He falls on that icy heart which the fire of His love cannot melt; on that proud and dissembling spirit without being able to touch it; in that body which is but a tomb full of rottenness. Alas, ought we to treat Jesus like that the first time He so lovingly visits us? O God! So young and already so guilty! To begin so soon to be a Judas! How painful to the Heart of Jesus must be the sin of this sacrilegious First Communion!

O Jesus! I thank Thee for the love which Thou didst show me in my First Communion: never shall I forget it! I am Thine, wholly Thine, for Thou art wholly mine: do with me as Thou wilt.

FOURTH STATION

JESUS MEETS HIS HOLY MOTHER

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

MARY accompanies Jesus to Calvary. She endures a real martyrdom in her soul on the way; but when one loves, one desires to suffer with the beloved.

Today, on His way of suffering, Jesus Eucharistic often meets with the children of His love, the spouses of His Heart, the ministers of His grace among His enemies. But far from consoling Him as Mary did, they join with His tormentors in humiliating, blaspheming, and denying Him. How many are the apostates and renegades who forsake the service and love of the Holy Eucharist as soon as that service calls for a sacrifice or for an act of practical faith!

O Jesus, my good Savior, with Mary my Mother, I will follow Thee amid humiliations, insults, and injuries, and make amends to Thee with my love!

FIFTH STATION

THE CYRENIAN HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

JESUS was giving way more and more beneath His burden. The Jews, wishing to have Him die on the Cross in order to complete His humiliation, urged Simon of Cyrene to help bear the Cross. The latter refused and had to be forced to take upon himself an instrument of death so ignominious in his eyes. He yielded and merited that Jesus should touch his heart and convert him.

Jesus calls people to Him in His Sacrament, and almost no one responds to His invitations: He invites them to His Eucharistic Banquet, and they have a thousand pretexts for refusing. to come to it. The faithless and ungrateful soul refuses the grace of Jesus Christ, the most excellent gift of His love. And Jesus remains alone, forsaken, His hands full of graces that no one wants; people are afraid of His love! Instead of the honors due to Him, Jesus receives most of the time only disrespect. People are embarrassed at meeting Him in the streets; they turn quickly away as soon as they see Him; they have not the courage to give Him the outward evidences of their faith.

O divine Savior, can this be so? Alas! It is only too true, and I feel the reproaches of my own conscience. Yes, often, bent upon an earthly pleasure, I have refused to hear Thy call; often, in order not to be obliged to amend my ways, I have rejected the invitation to Thy Table with which Thou in Thy love didst honor me. I regret it from the depths of my heart; I know that it is better to let everything else go than by my own fault to miss a single Communion, the greatest and the sweetest of Thy graces. Forget the past, dear Savior, and do Thou accept my resolutions for the future and by Thy strength help me to keep them!

SIXTH STATION

A HOLY WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

THE Face of the Savior no longer looks human; the executioners have covered it with mud, spittle, and blood! He, the splendor of God, is unrecognizable, and His divine Face is covered with defilements. Holy Veronica braves the soldiers. Beneath the pollution she has recognized her Savior and her God and, moved with pity, she wipes that august countenance. Jesus rewards her by imprinting His features upon the cloth with which she wipes His adorable Face.

O divine Jesus, Thou art greatly outraged, insulted, and profaned in Thy adorable Sacrament, and where are the compassionate souls who will make up for these abominations? Ah, it is saddening and appalling that so many sacrileges should be committed so lightly against the sublime Sacrament. It would seem that Jesus Christ is nothing more among us than an unregarded or even contemptible stranger!

It is true that He veils His Face beneath the appearances of very weak and lowly species: that is in order that our love may discover in them His divine features. O Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, Son of the living God and I adore Thy holy Face, full of glory and majesty, beneath the Eucharistic veil! Lard, I beseech Thee to imprint Thy features in my heart, that wherever I go, I may carry Jesus with me, Jesus Eucharist!

SEVENTH STATION

JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

IN spite of Simon’s help, Jesus succumbs a second time to His weakness, and it is a cause of new sufferings for Him. His hands and knees are wounded by His falls on this laborious way, and the ill-treatment inflicted by His executioners increases with their rage. Oh, how ineffectual is human aid without the help of Jesus Christ! And how many falls are in store for him that relies on others!

How often the God of the Eucharist falls nowadays by Communion in lukewarm and cowardly hearts that receive Him without preparation, possess Him without reverence, and let Him go without an act of love and gratitude! Thus Jesus’ stay within us is fruitless because of our coldness. Who would dare to receive one of the great of the earth with as little attention as the King of Heaven is every day received?

Divine Savior, I apologize to Thee for all my Communions that have been lukewarm and without devotion. How many times Thou hast already come to me! I thank Thee for them and I mean to be faithful to Thee in the future: only give me Thy love, that is enough!

EIGHTH STATION

JESUS CONSOLES THE HOLY WOMEN WHO WEEP FOR HIM

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

IT was the Savior’s mission in the days of His mortal life to comfort the afflicted and the persecuted. He desires to be faithful to it at the very time of

His greatest sufferings. Thus He forgets Himself and dries the tears of the holy women who weep over His sorrows and His passion. What goodness!

In His divine Sacrament Jesus has hardly anyone to console Him for His abandonment by His own people or for the crimes committed against Him. Day and night He is there, alone. Oh, if His eyes could weep, what tears they would shed for the ingratitude and neglect of His own! If His Heart could still suffer, what torments He would feel at seeing Himself forsaken in this way, even by His friends!

Yet, for all that, as soon as we come to Him, He receives us with kindness, listens to our cornplaints, to the often very long and selfish tale of our woes, and He forgets Himself to comfort us and strengthen us. O divine Savior, why do I so often depend on human consolation instead of coming to Thee? I feel that this wounds Thy Heart, which is jealous of my own. Be Thou in Thy Holy Eucharist my only consolation, my one confidant! One word, one look of Thy loving kindness will suffice me. Let me love Thee with all my heart, and then do with me as Thou wilt!

NINTH STATION

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

HOW greatly Jesus suffered in this third fall! He lies overcome by the weight of His Cross, and His executioners with all their cruelty can hardly raise Him up again. Jesus chooses to fall a third time before being lifted up on His Cross, as though to give evidence of His regret at being unable to carry it over the whole world.

Jesus will come to me a last time in Viaticum before I, also, leave this land of exile. Lord, grant me this grace, the most precious of all and the completion of all the graces of my life! But, oh, let me receive Thee worthily in that last Communion so full of love! How terrible is the fall of Jesus in His last visit to the heart of one dying who adds the crime of sacrilege to all his past sins, who receives unworthily. Him Who is going to judge him and thus profanes the Viaticum of his salvation! In what a grievous state Jesus must find Himself in a heart that detests Him, in a spirit that disdains Him, in a sinful body that is given over to the devil!

But what will be the judgment passed on these unhappy souls? One trembles at the thought. Forgive them, O Lord, forgive them! We beseech Thee for all the dying: grant that they may die in Thy arms after they have received Thee worthily in Viaticum!

TENTH STATION

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

HOW much He must suffer in this cruel and pitiless stripping off of his garments! They tear off His clothing that has stuck to His Wounds, they reopen them, they tear His Flesh. How much He must suffer in His modesty, treated as one would blush to treat a low wretch and a slave, who die at least in the shroud that is to cover them in the grave!

Jesus is stripped of His garments also in His sacramental state. Not satisfied to see Him stripped, through His love for us, of His glory and His divinity, of the beauty of His humanity, His enemies rob Him of the honor of divine worship, pillage His churches, profane His sacred vessels and His tabernacles, and cast Him on the ground. He, the King and Savior of men, is delivered up to their sacrilegious will as on the day of His Crucifixion.

By allowing Himself to be stripped thus in the Holy Eucharist, Jesus wishes to lead us to the state of voluntary poverty, wherein we denude ourselves of every desire, that we may be clothed with His life and His virtues. O Jesus Eucharist, be my only possession!

ELEVENTH STATION

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

WHAT agony Jesus endures when He is nailed to the Cross! Without a miracle of His power, He could not have suffered it and lived.

But the wood to which Jesus is nailed on Calvary is without fault or defilement, whereas in an unworthy Communion, the sinner crucifies Jesus in his guilty body. It is as though one were to attach a living body to a corpse that is in a state of corruption. On Calvary, He is crucified by His declared enemies; here, by His children, who crucify Him in hypocritical devotion. On Calvary, He is crucified but once; here, every day and by how many Christians!

O divine Savior, I pray Thee to forgive me for having failed to mortify my senses: most cruelly dost Thou atone for my fault! Thou desirest, by Thy Holy Eucharist, to crucify my nature, to immolate the old man without cease and to unite me to thine own crucified and resurrected life. Grant, O Lord, that I may give myself to Thee without reserve or condition!

TWELFTH STATION

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

JESUS dies in order to redeem us. His last mercy is the forgiveness He grants to His executioners; His last gift of love is His Holy Mother; His last desire is the thirst for suffering; His last act is the abandonment of His soul and His life into the hands of His Father.

In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus continues to love with the love He showed to me at His death. Every morning He is immolated in the Holy Sacrifice and loses His sacramental existence in them that receive Him; in the heart of the

sinner. He dies for that soul's condemnation.

From His Host He offers me the graces for my redemption, the price of my salvation. But in order that I may share therein, He wishes me to die with Him and for Him. Grant me that grace, O my God, the grace of dying to sin and to self and of living only to love Thee in Thy Holy Eucharist!

THIRTEENTH STATION

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

AND PLACED IN THE ARMS OF HIS MOTHER

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

JESUS is taken down from the Cross and confided to His Mother, who clasps Him to her heart and offers Him to God as Victim for our salvation.

Now it is for us to offer Jesus as Victim on the altar and in our hearts for ourselves and for others. He belongs to us: God the Father gives Him to us; He gives Himself to us, so that we may offer Him for our salvation.

How unfortunate it is that this infinite Price lies unused in our hands because of our indifference! Let us offer Him in union with Mary and pray this good Mother to offer Him with us.

FOURTEENTH STATION

JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHER

V. We adore Thee, O Christ…

JESUS chooses to undergo the humiliation of the tomb, and He is given over to the custody of His enemies: He is still their prisoner.

But it is in the Holy Eucharist that Jesus is really entombed; He remains there not just for three days, but for all time, and we are the ones He asks to guard Him. He is our prisoner of love. The corporal covers Him like a shroud; the lamp burns before His altar as before the place of the dead; around Him reigns the silence of death.

In coming into our heart in Holy Communion, Jesus chooses to be entombed again, within us. Let us make ready for Him a sepulcher that is worthy of Him, one that is new and white, unoccupied by earthly affections; let us anoint Him with the perfume of our virtues.

Let us come to do Him homage for those who do not come; let us adore Him in His Tabernacle, console Him in His prison; let us beg of Him the grace of recollection and of death to the world, that we may lead a hidden life in the Holy Eucharist!

Note:

Blessed Eymard rated the Stations of the Cross among the most important exercises of a retreat. Long experience had taught him to find in the Wounds of Jesus the forgiveness, the peace, and all those graces for which the soul hungers while on retreat. Right up to his death, he made the Stations of the Cross every day, in the evening, even after the fullest and most wearisome day's work. Therefore he recommended this devotion as one whose full value he knew. In the beautiful words of the Following of Christ: "In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against the enemy, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of heart, in the cross is joy of spirit."

But to the Eucharistic soul, Calvary is the altar, and the divine Crucified One is Jesus Hostia. It hears round about the outcries of the throng against Him Who answers only with the silence of the lamb; it sees into the plots of the scribes and the pharisees; it knows the bargaining of these new Judases who sell to the demon in their souls, to their vices, to their self-interest, the good Master Who has just given Himself to them in the kiss of Communion. Every day it sees Jesus in His Eucharist delivered up, denied by cowardice and human respect. The Holy Eucharist is the Passion continued and renewed!

The only difference is that the dolorous Eucharistic way passes through the whole world, crisscrosses it in every direction, and that the drama has lasted for nineteen centuries. What? But Jesus is glorious, immortal, impassable in the Blessed Sacrament! Why picture Him to us as suffering, when He can suffer no more and as humiliated when He reigns as King triumphant? It is true, and very fortunate that Jesus Eucharist can die no more, that men's hatred could wreak itself upon His sacred person only once at Jerusalem! What priest would cause Jesus to come down upon an altar that would be a bloody Calvary for Him? But do sins, insults, and sacrileges wound the living Heart of Jesus Hostia less grievously because He is beyond the physical reach of the tortures which our arms of flesh would make Him undergo? Do not men, inspired by what can only be an infernal rage, make every effort to torment Him?

The Passion continues therefore at our hand; it continues at the hand of tormentors ravening after a Victim Who, though continually immolated by their efforts and desires, ever escapes their blows and who finds in this Passion, as in an inexhaustible fountainhead, a deathless and glorious life.Oh, the mysteries of the Eucharistic sufferings of Jesus! He suffers as God suffers; He is angered and moved as God is angered and moved, without those feelings marring His happiness or diminishing His joy.

He no longer suffers at present; but in the moment when He instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament, there passed before His soul the vision of the outrages, insults, and profanations which would be heaped upon Him in the course of the centuries. By His foreknowledge of the future He saw in their very smallest details, in their most secret and delicate subtleties, the acts of indifference, the sacrileges, and the profanations which our malice held in store for Him. He saw and He knew; his Heart felt. He had the power to let His Heart feel in that one instant anguish equal to what He would have had to endure if He had remained sensible of suffering and a prey to our cruelty in the long martyrdom to which men's ingratitude and the fury of evil spirits have tried to subject Him.

The connection between Calvary and the Holy Eucharist is so close that no soul can enter truly and at all intimately into union with Jesus Hostia without feeling the need of consoling Him, of compassionating sufferings the mode and reason of which it does not understand but which are very real to its love. To meditate before the Blessed Sacrament on the Passion as it took place in Jerusalem is not enough for this soul: it feels in its heart that the Passion still continues. It is the Eucharistic Passion of Jesus with which it wishes to sympathize. A sweet inspiration, one which must give so much joy to the Heart of Jesus! For He complained to Saint Margaret Mary in such poignantly sorrowful terms that He received this compassion too rarely from His forgetful children!

To us who wish to know and honor the mystery of the Holy Eucharist in all its aspects belongs the beautiful mission of meditating frequently upon the Eucharistic Passion; it is for us to compassionate and weep for so many in- suits and profanations and to undertake reparation for them. Jesus no longer suffers now: He wishes to suffer in us and to prolong in His members, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, the martyrdom which He, our glorious Head, first endured so generously; He gave us the example and opened the way to us.